

Analytical Writing

Grades 9-12

Skills List

The writer of a competent sample of analytical writing demonstrates most or all of the following skills.

CONTENT

PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

- Poses an analytical question to focus the writing (e.g., “how?”; “why?”; “to what extent?” or “to what degree?”)
- Narrows focus on an authentic topic, issue, or problem
- Develops a strong, analytical controlling idea
- Provides necessary background and justification for the need for the writing
- Selects and targets an appropriate readership
- Anticipates reader’s needs (e.g., reactions, questions, need for more information)
- Uses appropriate voice and/or tone

IDEA DEVELOPMENT

- Breaks down topic, issue or problem into parts
- Shows analytical thinking about the subject
- Supports analytical controlling idea
- Draws important relationships and conclusions from analysis
- Develops analysis using justified, credible, and relevant support for ideas
- Shows sufficient understanding of content material
- Demonstrates ability to discuss content information analytically
- Integrates source material effectively to support ideas (as needed)
- Applies appropriate characteristics of the genre (e.g., article, proposal, speech, literary analysis)

STRUCTURE

ORGANIZATION

- Creates a logical context for reading (e.g., engaging lead, introduction, pertinent examples)
- Poses controlling idea in introduction
- Organizes analysis around the central controlling idea
- Structures and organizes analysis appropriately for the topic, issue, or problem (e.g., comparison/contrast, cause/effect, problem/solution, pro/con argument)
- Places main points in a meaningful order
- Demonstrates unity and coherence in writing
- Uses transitions and transitional elements effectively within sentences, among paragraphs, and throughout entire piece of writing
- Concludes effectively

SENTENCES

- Writes in complete and varied sentences
- Uses variety of sentence structures to influence reader's understanding

CONVENTIONS

LANGUAGE

- Chooses language appropriate and specific to subject of analysis
- Chooses appropriate and concise words to support meaning
- Uses correct grammar and usage

CORRECTNESS

- Observes standard conventions of grammar and usage
- Uses correct spelling and other conventions of language (e.g., capitalization, punctuation, abbreviation, documentation)
- Documents sources sufficiently and appropriately

As students move from grade to grade, they demonstrate growth in the control and complexity with which they use these skills.

The Kentucky Marker Papers
Committee did not find a sample
to fit the category

Ninth-grade Analytical

Submissions may still be sent to

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Wherefore Art Thou, Rock and Roll?

“To be or not to be...a hunk o hunk of burning love.” Not many can imagine the king of rock and roll and the king of Elizabethan theatre both sharing one thing in common, but the Broadway hit, *All Shook Up*, showcases both of these artists’ awe-inspiring talents. Although the similarities between Shakespeare and Elvis may seem few and far between both thespians understand how to bring a crowd to their feet. When asked about the decision to use Shakespeare’s themes, the writer of the musical, Joe DiPietro, states “I was trying to figure out what literary form I could use that brought joy to people and Shakespeare seemed to understand exactly what Elvis was singing about.” All audiences, be they Elizabethan or modern, meet Shakespeare’s plays with an overwhelmingly positive response. Shakespeare’s plays juxtapose deceitful motives, fate determined calamity, and loyal honor to intertwine modern and classical ideologies into a concoction of timeless genius.

Although deceit can appear in many forms, all audiences and ages understand the concept. Webster’s dictionary defines deceit as the act or practice of deceiving; concealment or distortion of the truth for the purpose of misleading. Shakespeare uses deceit as a tool to craft a complex plot with many twist and turns. Deceit creates a gray area between righteous and immoral characters. This gray area deceives not only the audience, but also the characters onstage. Deception leads Caesar to utter some of his most infamous words, “Et tu Brute? Then fall Caesar” (pg. 37). Caesar wrongly believed that Brutus played the role of his ally and placed unmerited trust in a man that turned around and, literally, stabbed him in the back. Does any man exist today that can not relate to this kind of trickery? Caesar understood that deceitful men can not be trusted.

Shakespeare exemplifies this through Caesar's reaction to Cassius, "Yond Cassius has a mean and hungry look; he thinks too much; such men are dangerous" (pg.9). All of us have found that at time we fear that a "Cassius" may be planning our downfall.

Shakespeare portrays Cassius as the villain-a sly, sleek, conniving snake that plans Caesar's defeat. Deceit, once again, lies at the heart of Cassius betrayal and overall character. One of the dominant aspects of Shakespeare's writing relies on the fact that the common man relates closely to the character's pangs and problems. There will never be a time when men are not trying to claw their way to the top through fraud and dishonesty.

If men are not clawing and falling by their own account, then they are fated from the beginning to fail. Shakespeare illustrates fate as a leading catalyst that spearheads misfortune. Shakespeare created a character that dealt with fate- the soothsayer. Throughout Shakespeare's whole work the soothsayer warns Caesar, "Beware the Ides of March" (pg.4). The soothsayer represents the fact that fate already knows of Caesar's inevitable, treacherous downfall on March 15th. Not only can the fortune tellers have premonitions, but even Calpurnia, Caesar's wife, tells him that she saw in a dream that his blood will soon flow about the Capitol. It seemed that from the beginning fate doomed Caesar to die at the hands of the conspirators. The appearance of Caesar's ghost and his premonition of disaster at Philippi justify the work of a supernatural being. At Philippi, after Cassius's hasty suicide, Brutus speaks of the evil spirit, "Oh Caesar, thou art mighty! Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords in our own proper entrails" (pg. 74). The ideology that the stars navigate our paths has continued to make an impact in today's society. The theme of fate gives the audience hope that the misfortune that

their faults solely do not cause all of their misfortune. A time will never come when men stop looking for someone else to blame besides themselves.

Opposite the deceit woven through Brutus and Cassius, Shakespeare displays honor and loyalty through Antony. Even once Caesar dies and the conspirators spare his life, Antony can only fathom revenge on behalf of Caesar. During his soliloquy Antony reveals his true feelings, "O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth, that I am meek and gentle with these butchers! Thou art the ruins of the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times" (pg.43). When given the chance to desert without repercussions, Antony stayed steadfast and noble and promised to avenge Julius Caesar. Even the conspirators, the villains, hold honor dear. They decide to commit suicide to preserve their honor, rather than letting Antony march them shamefully through the streets of Rome. All generations revere honor as a requirement for a proper man. Shakespeare uses this idea to portray his strong male characters- characters that others look up to and, in some instances, fear.

Shakespeare desired a connection with the masses. Therefore, he wrote themes into his plays that the all people would respect and understand. Shakespeare's themes stood the test of time and became the worldwide quintessence for entertain in theatre. As Elvis would say- Shakespeare has gotten everybody in every century "all shook up".

Work Cited

Shakespeare, William. Julius Caesar. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Pocket Books, 1992.

Engages reader Wherefore Art Thou, Rock and Roll?

With comparison "To be or not to be... a hunk o hunk of burning love." Not many can imagine the king of rock and roll and the king of Elizabethan theatre both sharing one thing in

common, but the Broadway hit, *All Shook Up*, showcases both of these artists' awe-inspiring talents. Although the similarities between Shakespeare and Elvis may seem few and far between both thespians understand how to bring a crowd to their feet. When asked about the decision to use Shakespeare's themes, the writer of the musical, Joe DiPietro, states "I was trying to figure out what literary form I could use that brought joy to people and Shakespeare seemed to understand exactly what Elvis was singing about."

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controlling idea / thesis poses central issue / concern of the analysis

transitions among sentences

attempts to relate to modern day

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analysis
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conclusion
related to
introduction

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*documents play on
'works cited' page*

Next Lessons

- *Narrowing focus
- *Connecting introduction and context for writing with body

Note: Could also be classified as "academic writing"

The Kentucky Marker Papers
Committee did not find a sample
to fit the category

Eleventh-grade Analytical

Submissions may still be sent to

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A True War Story

What is the definition of truth? Webster's Collegiate Dictionary states that the truth is, "Being in accordance with the actual state of affairs. Being that which is the case rather than what is manifest or assumed." While this description seems accurate, Tim O'Brien challenges this belief in his novel, "The Things They Carried." The story, expressed through a series of vignettes, outlines O'Brien's experiences in the Vietnam War. While a work of fiction, O'Brien places himself as the main character, blurring the line of distinction between that which is true and that which is invented. He further distorts this line by naming the characters of his novel after the real men that he fought beside in the war, and he tells the entire story as if it is true. In the chapter, "How to Tell a True War Story," O'Brien admits that he has invented and heavily distorted many of the stories within the book. He goes on to argue that the art of effective storytelling is laced with such embellishments in an attempt to convey the deeper truth behind the actual events. "The Things They Carried" clearly demonstrates that the subjection of literal truth is necessary to emphasize the underlying philosophical truth that stories are created to convey.

As O'Brien tells of Curt Lemon's death, he shows us the necessity of adding invented details to stories so that an audience can adequately understand the experiences that are being portrayed. As Lemon was playfully tossing a smoke grenade with his friend Rat Kiley, he stepped from the shade of the woods into the sunlight and onto a rigged mortar round. O'Brien says that Lemon probably thought it was the sunlight that killed him, as his face was suddenly illuminated with sunlight and he seemed to be

swallowed up into it. O'Brien states that whenever he tells this story, someone unfailingly seems to respond that they enjoyed the story, but it was too sad. They tell him that he should find happier stories to share. O'Brien argues that it is not a sad story that he is telling, but a love story. He highly romanticizes the sunlight lifting Lemon into a tree and taking him from this world, alluding to the fact that he was emotionally incapable of accepting such a crude and uncivilized death for one of his friends. This romanticized view of Lemon's death helps us to see the emotions that the soldiers felt in Vietnam, and O'Brien maintains that the only way to convey these emotions is to simply continue telling the story and adding bits and pieces of sentimentality to it each time.

According to O'Brien, sometimes the truest stories are not true at all. He tells the clichéd story of a group of soldiers walking through a war zone when suddenly a grenade is thrown into their path. One soldier leaps upon the grenade and sacrifices himself to save his comrades. O'Brien argues that it is highly unlikely that this story actually occurred, and if it actually took place it probably resulted in the death of the entire group anyway. O'Brien uses this as an example of the truths that can be carried in a fictional story. Through invented stories such as these, ordinary people can understand the innate sense of brotherhood and camaraderie shared by soldiers in Vietnam.

Perhaps the most profound implication that the subjectivity of truth holds upon storytelling is that stories help us understand and cope with the tragedies in our lives. O'Brien tells us the story of Linda, his childhood love. She died of cancer when they were very young, and O'Brien shows us how he imagined stories and encounters with Linda's spirit to help him cope with the trauma. By inventing stories and memories of her, he kept her alive in his mind. O'Brien admits that the relationship they shared was

probably not as deep as he remembers it to be, but over the years it has mentally transformed into a very passionate memory that has not only helped him cope with Linda's death, but with the horrors of Vietnam as well. By disregarding the truth and remembering her in a special way, O'Brien is able to use her memory to mend the tatters that his life has been reduced to after years of immense trauma and tragedy.

Throughout O'Brien's, "The Things They Carried," the recurring theme of the subjectivity of truth becomes increasingly important. This novel demonstrates that the truth can be completely irrelevant when compared to the deeper reality involved. It is often necessary in successful storytelling that the literal truth be suppressed in order for the more profound philosophical truths to be fully realized by the audience. Presented in an artfully intelligent and engaging style, O'Brien's work serves as an implicit allegory to this very fact, glorifying the confusion between reality and imagination and challenging the reader to question their own views on the matter. This work of fiction definitely tells a true war story, and by examining what lies beneath the surface, they are not only stories of war, but also stories that define the very nature of our lives.

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defines 'truth' to engage reader

uses language appropriate to subject of analysis

develops analytical controlling idea / thesis

develops ideas with examples for support

begins developing analysis of how literal truth plays a role in the truth of the story

development demonstrates the "why"

swallowed up into it. O'Brien states that whenever he tells this story, someone unfailingly seems to respond that they enjoyed the story, but it was too sad. They tell him that he should find happier stories to share. O'Brien argues that it is not a sad story that he is telling, but a love story. He highly romanticizes the sunlight lifting Lemon into a tree and taking him from this world, alluding to the fact that he was emotionally incapable of accepting such a crude and uncivilized death for one of his friends. This romanticized view of Lemon's death helps us to see the emotions that the soldiers felt in Vietnam, and O'Brien maintains that the only way to convey these emotions is to simply continue telling the story and adding bits and pieces of sentimentality to it each time.

demonstrates reader awareness

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uses irony to further develop controlling idea

ideas are organized logically

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Refocuses -
Conclusion
grows
logically
from body of
analysis

concludes
effectively -
anticipates
what readers
should know

Note: Original copy
included 'Works Cited'
page - the novel
and class notes